

14th District LEGISLATIVE REVIEW



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Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
Ways and Means



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Committees:

Audit Review and Oversight
(Republican leader)
Education
Health and Human Services Appropriations
Rules
Transportation

Dear friends and neighbors,

Although the 60-day regular legislative session ended March 11, House and Senate Democrat majorities did not reach an agreement about **how to balance the budget** and increase taxes. We were disappointed to be called back for a **special session**, especially because the reason for this extended time was **to raise your taxes**. We opposed any tax increases from the beginning, because families and employers are struggling to make ends meet, and the greater Yakima area is experiencing record high unemployment.

With the state budget facing a **\$2.8 billion shortfall**, we were optimistic in December the majority party would ask us to help balance the budget and that our ideas for **reforming state functions would be taken seriously**. Neither happened and we left Olympia April 13 discouraged.

There were several highlights and low-lights this year:

HIGHLIGHTS

- We introduced **gang legislation** brought to us by our communities in the 14th District and supported by many local officials, which passed the House, 90-6.
- We supported a constitutional amendment to give judges discretion to **deny bail to dangerous suspects** facing a life sentence. This measure will go to you, the voters, in November.
- We saved a \$250,000 appropriation for expansion of medical training of doctors at the Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences in Yakima.
- We fought for **education funding** and kept the state responsible for its constitutional duty.

We were pleased lawmakers approved House Resolution 4660, introduced by Rep. Norm Johnson, that honored the longtime community service of former Yakima mayor and civil-rights leader Henry Beauchamp. Pictured from left: Rep. Johnson, Henry and Wilma Beauchamp.



LOW-LIGHTS

- Criminal **gang bills** we sponsored to provide civil injunctions and nuisance responses **died** in the Senate.
- **The majority party voted to** suspend Initiative 960. For 10 hours, we debated against suspending this voter-approved measure that required a two-thirds vote of the Legislature or a vote of the people to raise taxes.
- House and Senate **budget proposals** continued past spending practices. We voted "no."
- The majority party considered dozens of **tax increase** proposals.
- The Senate held a public hearing on a proposal to impose a **state income tax** just one week before the regular session ended and with less than 12 hours notice to the public. Fortunately, the proposal **did not move forward**.

It is an honor to serve you. Please feel free to contact us with any questions, comments or suggestions about state government.

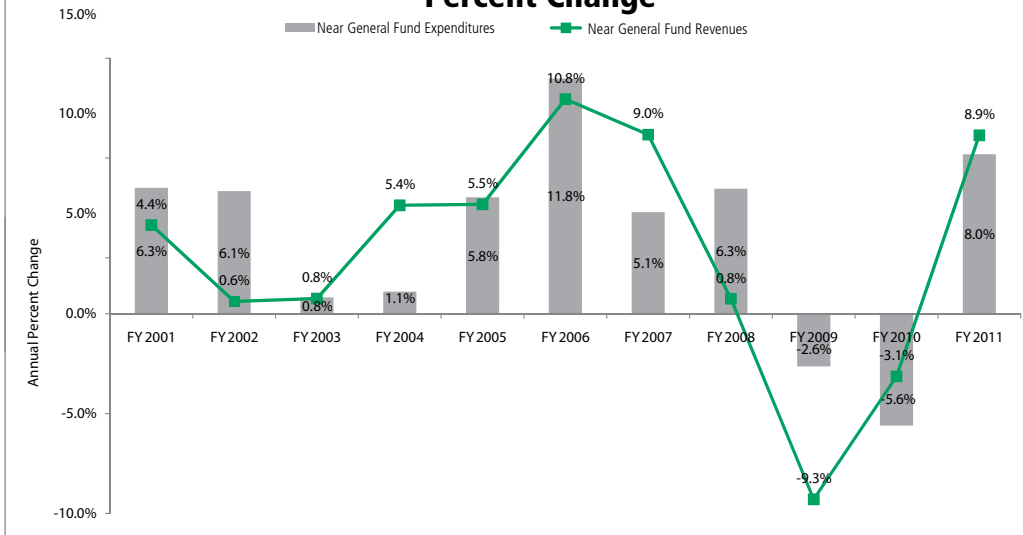
Sincerely,

Charles Ross

Norm Johnson

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Near General Fund-State Expenditures and Revenues Percent Change



HRC Policy

Data: LEAP, Forecast Council. FY 10 and FY 11 expenditures as enacted. FY 10 and FY 11 revenues as forecast Nov. 2009.

2/15/2010

reforms. Our ideas would have put Washington in a position to truly prosper and survive future downturns more easily. We will continue to fight for a smaller, smarter government that provides services for the most needy while efficiently spending your tax dollars.

BUDGET AND TAXES

We believe jobs, not tax increases, are the solution to Washington's budget problems. When people are working, they are less dependent on government assistance. They also have more disposable income to spend, and that in turn helps

increase revenue to the state which provides for the core services of government. Tax increases only prolong an already difficult recession and stifle job growth.

Unfortunately, the final budget approved by the majority party **reduces the state budget by only 4 percent** from the previous two-year budget, relies heavily on one-time federal money for ongoing programs, and contains one of the largest tax increases in state history. **We voted against the budget because tax increases will hurt our state's economy. We are also concerned that existing problems with the state budget were not resolved, but pushed down the road.** This will likely result in yet another sizeable budget deficit next year.

OUR SOLUTIONS IGNORED

We provided many ways to save money in state government that would have helped close a \$2.8 billion supplemental budget shortfall **WITHOUT raising taxes.** Balancing the budget is not easy, but **when families and employers are struggling**, state government must share in the sacrifice.

State programs need an overhaul to reduce bureaucracy and provide a smarter, leaner government for the people of this state, such as:

- The **Basic Health Plan** is funding families who could afford private health insurance. We should reserve this for the truly needy.
- The **injured workers' fund**, also known as workers' compensation insurance, is facing bankruptcy due to high administrative costs, despite the fact that claims have decreased over the years. The fund is just one of four state-run programs remaining in the nation that does not offer competition. We must encourage competition and more efficient administration of the fund. (*Read Rep. Johnson's column online at: <http://houserepublicans.wa.gov/news/jobs-economy/time-to-reform-workers-compensation-system>*)
- Collective bargaining contracts with state employees were made just before the economy went sour. We encouraged the governor and Democrat leadership **to renegotiate benefits and pay increases for state employees.**

As soon as they suspended Initiative 960, the majority party also suspended any real discussion of

Personal airplanes
Gasoline **Candy** **Real Estate Agents**
Home sellers **Income**
Home foreclosures
Fertilizer
Bottled water **UTILITIES**
Coal **Tobacco** **Soda**
Custodians

Some of the more than 70 tax and fee increases introduced in the Legislature this year. Those in green were passed by the majority party.

JOBS AND ECONOMY

In the 14th District, 5,221 people were looking for work in February. That's nearly the size of the entire population of Union Gap (5,655). **We believe jobs are the answer to our state budget problem.** That's why **we supported the House Republican "Made in Washington" jobs plan** that would retain existing jobs and get people working again. Our legislation would have:

- reformed the state's workers' compensation and unemployment insurance systems to lower employers' costs so they could create new jobs;
- provided **regulatory relief** by reforming government services;
- increased affordable, renewable energy supplies; and
- protected **employees' health care** by reducing costs and offering consumer choice.



Unfortunately, only one of the 15 bills in this package passed the Legislature and was signed by the governor. Co-sponsored by Rep. Johnson, House Bill 2603 allows a grace period before issuing fines to employers who are found in violation of the state's many rules and regulations.

Next year we will support these same ideas again.

TRANSPORTATION

Population growth and economic development in the Yakima area have increased traffic, congestion and collisions along **intersections on U.S. Highway 12 west of Yakima.** We're pleased that we were able to secure \$750,000 in the transportation budget to begin preliminary work for a new intersection at Allan Road and **U.S. Highway 12 just east of Naches.** The project will include turn lanes and widening of Allan Road, which will create a safer intersection.

EDUCATION



We are glad to report \$1.5 million was appropriated in the capital budget for construction of a new 12,000 square foot facility in Yakima that will house **Junior Achievement** programs for young people. Junior Achievement is a national organization that provides business, economics and life-skills education to students at K-12 schools.

PUBLIC SAFETY



Rep. Charles Ross testifies on criminal gang legislation in front of the House Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

We continue to hear from community members concerned for their and their families' safety because of criminal gang violence in our neighborhoods. We introduced several measures this year aimed at fighting **criminal gangs** that are spreading throughout our state. Many people from the 14th District came to Olympia to testify in favor of these bills. The legislation would have:

- increased penalties for gang members who use **intimidation** to coerce others into joining or staying in a gang;
- provided local governments more approaches to go after gang members with nuisance ordinances, **restraining orders** and **civil injunctions**;
- classified criminal gang activity as a **nuisance** and provided a process for neighbors to file legal action to stop that activity; and
- allowed law enforcement to **legally confiscate and take possession of houses**, cars, cash and other properties that have been proven to be involved in gang-related crimes.

In addition, we supported legislation to:

- deny bail for the most **dangerous offenders** facing a life sentence;
- expand penalties for those who **aid criminals**, whether they are family or not; and
- increase penalties for **repeat domestic violence abusers**.

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HEALTH CARE

Thirty-eight of Washington's 39 counties are **medically underserved and need doctors**, especially in rural areas of the state. As more doctors retire, this problem will become worse.

The **Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences** in Yakima opened in 2008 to train doctors who can serve rural areas across the state. Last year, Rep. Johnson secured \$800,000 in the state budget to support this training. However, this year, the supplemental budget proposed to eliminate \$400,000 of this funding. Rep. Johnson worked with budget negotiators to restore \$250,000 of this appropriation.

We were also pleased to secure \$250,000 in the capital construction budget for expansion of **Children's Village** in Yakima. This is a facility that serves children with special health care or developmental needs.



Preserving the Yakima Valley School

Protection of our state's most vulnerable citizens remains one of our top priorities in the budget. The Yakima Valley School in Selah offers the best of care for its developmentally disabled residents, as well as 275 jobs in our community.

Last year, the governor proposed closure of this facility because of the budget deficit. We recognized that closure of the school could be tramatic for residents, as well as costly, not only in the terms of dollars, but the emotional price families would pay as they are separated from their loved ones.

We worked successfully with legislators from both parties to preserve the Yakima Valley School. As a result, it remains funded in the budget.



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